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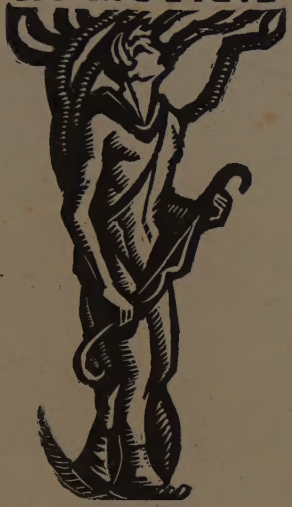
APOLLO IN MOURNE



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"In the Kingdom of Mourne"

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APOLLO IN MOURNE

A Play in One Act

By

RICHARD ROWLEY

With Woodcuts by

LADY MABEL ANNESLEY

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OLDPARK ROAD BRANCH

DUCKWORTH
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CHARACTERS

Divinities	JOVE.
	APOLLO.
Mortals	MARY BLANE.
	PADDY SOYE.

The Time is the present.
The First Scene is in the Palace of Jove on Olympus.
The Second Scene is on the road that descends Spelga, between the Deer's Meadow and Hilltown.
The Third Scene is in the bar of a public-house in the Mournes.

This play was first produced by the Northern Drama League, in the Central Hall, Belfast, on January 22nd and 23rd, 1926.

Jove -	A. S. G. LOXTON
Apollo -	ARCHIBALD DOUGLAS
Mary Blane	OLGA FIELDEN
Paddy Soye	W. R. GORDON

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SCENE I

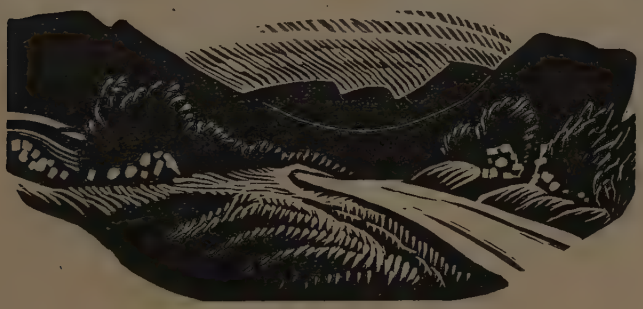
A hall in the Palace of Jove. The scene is in not quite complete darkness. The figure of Apollo is dimly visible, leaning against a pillar, at the right extremity of the stage. In the centre of the stage, in the background, a flight of wide marble steps can be seen faintly, rising to a throne which is in complete darkness. The voice of Jove issues from the darkness.

JOVE

Insolent; unrepentant; unsubdued;
Hardened in fault you bend your haughty brows
Upon me in cold silence. Shall I plead?
Shall I sue you as a servant sues his lord?
Abase myself before you with a pray'r.
To melt your arrogance? Oh, I am weary
Of your golden beauty and your naughty heart,
Weary of all the daily jars you breed
Amongst the gods, till the Olympian calm
Is shattered by your folly. Every day
There is new mischief, every day complaint

Of some fresh plot against th' Immortals' peace.
There was a quiet in Olympus once
Was never broken by a word of strife,
Then I could dream thro' the long golden hours
In contemplation of my task divine,
Watching my little world beneath me swim
From storm to sunshine, and from dark to light,
Through the stretched clouds that veil the deep abyss.
And scanning all the works and woes of men,
Their hourly sorrow, their brief happiness,
I was made well content turning once more
Unto the paradisal atmosphere,
The joy secure of heaven's ordered ways
Obedient to my will. That is past, is gone
Since you, bright rebel, plotted evil things,
Until the paths of my own mount are thronged
With riot and clamour like a mortal city's
O'er-crowded narrow streets—I will no more
Have patience with you, will no more abate
The just resentment of your brother gods.
You would break up the fellowship of Heaven,
Destroy the peace of our fair Commonwealth,
Make gods like men angry and full of hate,
Bring jealous glances to the starry eyes
Of Juno, and fill Venus's white breast
With spite and envy. I have delayed too long,
And will no more. Therefore hear now your doom,
You shall go forth this day from High Olympus
To bide on earth till you have purged your sin,
And that your fault is great, no blossomed valley
Of Thessaly, no olive groves of Crete,

Nor any land soothed by the Midland Sea,
Shall hold you exile, but a northern land,
A land of haggard mountains which wild rivers
Carve into horrid shapes. There shall you wander
Amidst a barbarous people harsh of speech
And of fierce aspect, dwelling in huts of stone,
Seeing the sun but seldom, eating strange meats,
And never tasting wine, or fruits, or oil.
There in that frigid clime, cold as your heart,
There in those granite hills, hard as your spirit,
Dwell till repentance come to change your mood,
And when you sue for grace—I may attend
And grant you pardon—
Till that time, Farewell.



[CURTAIN]

Scene II

Late Autumn Twilight—A road in the Mourne Mountains. Apollo is leaning against the stone dyke that borders the road. He wears above his robes a long shabby frieze overcoat, which reaches to his heels. His feet are stuck into a pair of rough country boots. A very old hat is pressed down on his golden hair.

APOLLO

Surely this dark country
Is far enough removed from high Olympus
That I can curse old Jove with unreined tongue
For planning such an exile. Curses on him,
May he turn mortal, suffer from old age,
Have rheumy eyes, a toothless mouth, racked limbs
Twisted with endless pains. Juno deceive him,
And when he goes a-wooing on the sly
May all the golden girls reject his love
And laugh him into madness. Curses on him,
Only his malice could invent this land,
These barren hills, these roads befouled with mire,

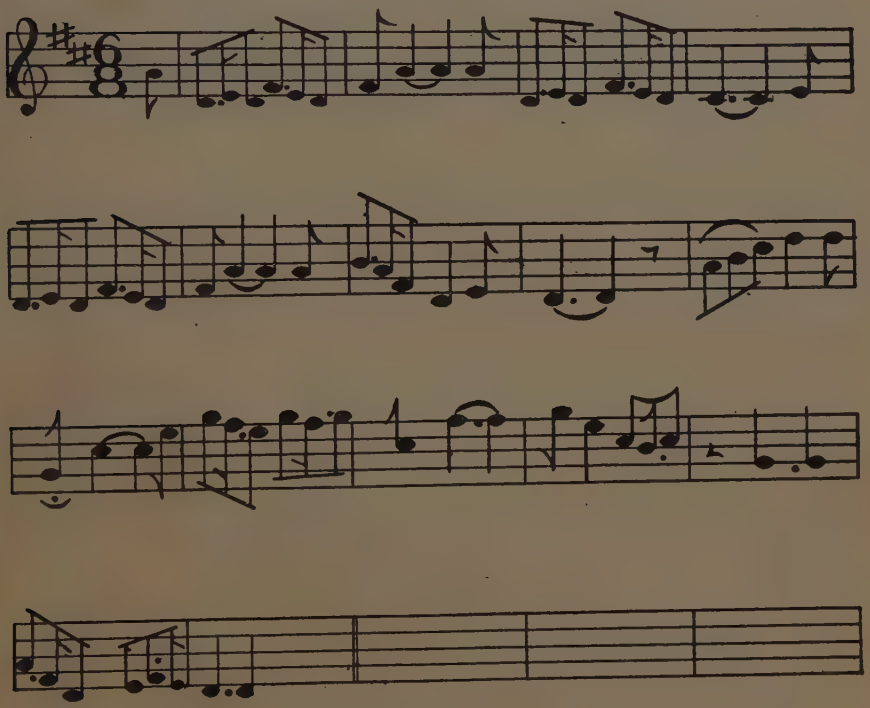
This cruel wind sharp as a scythian blade.
I should be dead, had not yon countrywoman
Given me this ancient coat and clumsy sandals
In payment for a song—and for a kiss.
And now the night descends, this wilderness
Is as inhospitable as a rock
Where only sea-gulls perch. If a god can die,
To-night I die amidst these nameless mountains;
Foxes and ravens will pick clean my bones
And never know the flesh they eat divine.

A voice is heard singing in the distance

The piper that played before Moses
Blew such a merry tune
That all the lasses o' Jewry
Were up an' dancin' soon.
Shakin' their coal-black hair,
Kickin' their skirts up high,
An' the piper, he says till Moses:
" Sure I cannot pipe if I'm dry."

An' Moses, he called the Butler
That served in his saloon:
" Have ye any drink in the house, sez he,
Would do for this Irish loon."
" Drink," said the Butler, " drink galore
" In bottles short an' tall,
" Wine an' brandy an' whisky an' beer."
Sez the Piper, " Bring them all."

An' the Piper that played before Moses
He sat an' he drank an' drank,
" By the pow'rs," sez he, " I was mortal dry,
" Dry as a coffin-plank;
" But hand me that dozen o'Guinness
" Ye have stored away on the shelf,
" An' be God I'll blow you a sprig on the pipes
" Will set Moses to dance himself."



Enter Paddy Soye

PADDY *singing*

The piper that played before Moses——

He breaks off, seeing Apollo
What sort o' figure o' fun is this? Are ye escaped from Downpatrick, my lad, or run away from a travellin' circus?

APOLLO

Wandering in exile midst these desert hills,
I am benighted, lost, famished with cold,
And faint with hunger. If you have a heart
That can feel pity, guide me to some roof,
Where I can shelter, with a fire to warm me;
Where a crust of wheaten cake, a flask of wine
May heat my blood, by this sharp air congealed.

PADDY *admiringly*
Sowl, ye're a lad: ye've a great tongue on ye, an' a wealth o' fine words. But for all your noble phrases ye haven't told me much. Where are ye from, an' what are ye doin' on a mountainy road in Mourne, in that rig?

APOLLO

Olympus is my home; and yesterday
I was a God.

PADDY *aside*
Och, dear-a-dear, this is bad. The poor fellow, it's Downpatrick Asylum he's from for sure. I be to humour him.

APOLLO

But having stirred the wrath
Of the All-Father I was hurled from Heaven,
Doomed here to sojourn, 'midst this wilderness,
Until my fault be purged.

PADDY *aside*
He'll have had some row wi' the chief warder an' has cut an'

run. Man, its a pity, an' him a fine lookin' lad too. What am I to do wi' him?

APOLLO

Would you earn thanks from a Divinity?
For even a god in exile can repay
Service of humans. Would you earn my thanks
And such reward as you may ask? Kind stranger,
Guide me, be it even to the humblest cot
Of the poorest shepherd—there to lie and rest
Sheltered from this sharp wind; and I will share
His poverty. Anhungered, shivering,
Weary and faint, I can no more abide
The fierce assault of the untempered storm.

PADDY

Feth, an' no wonder, in a wheen o' white rags covered by yon tattered frieze ulster, ye can't be very warm. I want no pay, I'll do it heartily an' kindly, an' look for no thanks neither. Come along then, my boyo, I'll take you to Barney McAleenan's pub. I'm sure you could do with a drink, an' there's the right purty wee slip of a girl to pour it for ye there. It's no more than a bit of a mile down the hill. Come on wi' ye, for I must call roun' at McManus's about thon wee pig.

APOLLO

My throat is parched. And at this very hour
Around Jove's board my brothers lie reclined
Whilst Ganymede pours in the golden beakers
The sunny floods of nectar.

PADDY

It's not much nectar in gold cups ye'll be gettin' in McAleenan's; but if a bottle of stout will do ye, I'll say this for Barney: he

keeps the best Guinness in the kingdom o' Mourne. Come on wi' ye now, foot it like a man.

APOLLO

Alas, I am too weary for the toil
Of tramping this rough road another league:
Leave me, kind stranger, let me perish here.

He sits down on a stone by the road-side

PADDY

Och; what am I to do wi' ye? [*He pulls Apollo by the shoulder. He refuses to move.*] It's clean bate he is, the poor fellow. He'll collapse on my hands here in a minute, an' then I'll be in a quare fix. It'll be the Coroner's Court, an' me the only one that seen him die. [*He bends over Apollo and tries to raise him.*] It's no use, he's done. [*He claps his hand to his hip-pocket.*] Holy saints, if I wasn't forgettin' the wee naggin bottle I was takin' home to me Gran'da. A sup o' that ought to put life in him. [*He draws the bottle out of his pocket, and extracts the cork.*] Sure it has the kick in it would bring spunk into the heels of a dead mule. [*He bends over Apollo and puts bottle to his lips.*] Here, drink this, lad. It'll warm the blood in your veins.

Apollo coughs, splutters, then leaps to his feet

APOLLO

I saw already the Plutonian shades,
The dim gray river with its waiting boat
And shadowy oarsman. What divine elixir
Was that recalled me from a grisly dream?
A splendid fire goes coursing thro' my veins,
My heart is full of courage, I will live

Be it but to drink again a glorious draught
Of that inspiring wine. Let me once more
Taste it, and tasting be once more a god.

PADDY *reaching bottle*
Here ye are, I don't grudge it to ye. But for heaven's sake remember me poor oul' gran'da.

Apollo takes a long drink from the bottle, and keeps it in his hand

APOLLO
I have drunk the nectar poured by Ganymede,
In high Olympus amid feasting gods,
On earth I have drunk the wine of mighty kings,
But never till this day, in this wild land,
Have my lips tasted waves of liquid gold
Melted by mellow fire. For a god only
Should this heroic vintage be outpoured
Lest drinking of it men be turned to gods
And storm Olympus to throw Jove to earth.

He raises the bottle to his lips again. Paddy clutches his arm

PADDY
Houl' hard, Mister, I'm not a nagyur, nor miserly, wi' drink nor money. But think o' the oul gran'da that's at home wi' his tongue hangin' out. An' besides ye're not very strong in the head, an' ye're near han' drunk already, by the speech o' you.

APOLLO
Nay, I must drink again, hinder me not
Lest I be angry. Is this drunkenness,
This golden mood that lies upon my spirit
As glad as sunlight upon shining waters?

Be not incensed, thou kind and friendly man,
For thou hast cherished life in me, when cold
And weariness had brought me near to death.
Let me embrace thee.

He throws his arms round Paddy

PADDY, *breaking away*
Och, don't slobber over me. I hate folk that's too lovin' when they're in drink. Here, take my arm and come along to McAleenan's wi' me. If your feet can go as fast as your tongue, we ought to get there in no time at all. An' I must hurry, for I be to go roun' to McManus's about thon wee pig.

APOLLO
Before we venture on this lonely road,
Let me again taste yon divine elixir.

PADDY
Divil a drop, me boyo. The bottle's emp'y, an' me gran'da is chated o' his drink; but if it was as full as all the distilleries in Comber, not a sup would cross your lips, for till my notion ye're as drunk as an owl.

APOLLO
One sip, kind stranger, for my heart is faint.

PADDY
Damn the sip, if yer heart's as faint as yer head is weak. Come along now, or ye'll have me missin' thon wee pig. I'll arm ye down to McAleenan's, and ye can go in there an' sit by the fire till I'm finished my business at McManus's. Then I'll come back for ye. Come on now, it's not many men would let you emp'y their bottle, and then set you down by the fire wi'

the tightest wee lass in the Mournes. What more could I be doin' for me own brother, an' you that's a black stranger till me. Come on, man, for heaven's sake, or I'll be too late for thon wee jewel of a pig. [*Exeunt.*

[CURTAIN.]

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Scene III

McAleenan's Pub. A farm-house kitchen, with earth floor. Left, an open fireplace with a peat fire. Right, a dresser with crockery. At back of stage a primitive bar with bottles and glasses, and a door into house. Centre, a table on which is a large enamel-ware bowl, in which Mary Blane is washing glasses. She is tall and slender, and has a mass of red hair.

As curtain rises she stands up, and stretches her arms above her with a gesture of weariness and impatience. When she speaks she has a County Down accent, but her voice is pleasant, and rather refined. It is only when excited that her speech relapses into dialect.

MARY

I'm heart weary of it all. Every day the same thing. Servin' drinks to a lot of small farmers and labourers. Cookin' meals for my uncle an' the men. Washin' up and slavin' from dawn to dark. If he meant me for a servant's life why did Uncle Barney send me to the Convent School? Och, if something would only happen. Something different, something strange, aye, even something terrible.

She sits down and resumes her washing, and then in a few moments abandons it. Walks across and puts a turf in the fire, goes to bar-counter and re-arranges some bottles.

An' what's to be at the end of it all? After the fine dreams I dreamed at school, to marry Paddy Soye? Paddy's a decent lad, and I like him well. But to settle down on his mountainy farm, to live in yon pokey wee cottage at the back o' beyond. An' me that thought I'd be meetin' some great lover that would come ridin' up to the door on a gallopin' horse, an' carry me off across the mountains. An' Paddy that hasn't a horse to his name. He has to borrow a neighbour's to do his bit o' ploughing. I suppose I'm a fool. Many's the girl would jump at Paddy. But his teasin' and chaffin' isn't my notion o' love-makin'. It's like yon smoky fire compared to sunrise. Oh! I want something better out o' life. Love should be a splendid and fearsome thing. It should come on a body like the Bann in spate roaring down the gorge of Spelga. Or like a great storm sweeping across the Deer's Meadow, that roots up the plants of heather and

sends them flying before it like wee birds. It should be full of terrible music, like the wind you hear at night raving through the trees and over the roof, till you've too feared for sleep.

She picks up a glass and polishes it silently

Och! what do I know about it. Sure my head's just filled wi' foolishness. It would ha' been far better for me if I'd never heard of those ballads an' stories I was always readin' at school. It's the quare mistake, to be askin' too much from life. There's far more wisdom in takin' what's sent, an' makin' the best of it.

She stops, and stands in an attitude of listening

There's a footstep! Who's comin' in here now?

Apollo enters. Mary stands up and looks at him astonished. Apollo regards her intently—makes a step towards her—then halts. At first he speaks in a musing tone, as tho' remembering.

APOLLO

There was a maiden in Cyrene once
Had hair like yours, woven of ruddy gold,
The colour of spilt sunshine on low clouds
When the dawn-glory sets the East a-flame.
I loved her to her hurt—she had violet eyes—
Now that earth covers her I had not thought
Her memory lived in my forgetful heart
Nor her beauty's equal in this desolate world.
Oh, you recall to me unhappy things
And fill my shamèd eyes with human tears.

MARY

Who are you? Where do you come from? What is your name?

APOLLO

But yesterday I was a god—to-day
Cast out from heaven I become a mortal,

With a mortal's longing and a mortal's fears,
With bitter knowledge of how beauty passes,
How transient is delight. Ev'n pow'r divine
Cannot hold back the swift feet of the hours,
Cannot delay the sunset, nor make last
The golden lights of dawn. Eternal stars
Will flicker and fail and once again be kindled,
But when the splendour of your eyes burns out,
Or when the morning fades from off your cheek,
When the scarlet of your smile deserts your lips,
And the sun of youth flames in your hair no longer,
What will my prayer avail more than a man's?
I cannot give you immortality
Nor stop the hurrying onset of decay,
For you being mortal are bound fast in time
Beyond escape. Oh! you are lovelier so
And more desirable. The sorrow of your beauty
Is as a sharp edge on a noble wine,
Stirring my thirst to passion.

MARY

This is a wooing might make a girl have pride in herself—But how strange it is. Where are you from? Your words are like a song, like a noble song they are, and rarely different from the speech a young lass will hear in this country. I hardly understand them all, though they mind me of something I have heard in a dream. I've wakened in the night, and had the feeling of rich words like yours in my ears, but when I listened in the dark there was no sound there. Only the old clock ticking on the lobby, or perhaps a mouse scratching in the skirting boards.

APOLLO

The voice you listened for in those dark hours,
The music haunting you in virgin dreams,
The message your expectant heart desired,
All these foretold my coming, these foretold
Love and the beauty of it; laughter, tears,
Heart-rending griefs, the agonies of delight.
Therefore forget all you have known till now.
The daily duties and the petty cares,
That a young girl finds in her father's house,
Forget all these, for love is like the waters
Of a tempestuous ocean, wiping out
The memory of the past, and cancelling
All duty owed the kindness of long years;
And once your ivory feet step in its tide
You will be borne away by its passionate flood,
You will become the foam upon the breakers,
Or the white sea-bird perched on perilous crests
Or the shafted moon-beam stretched upon the wave.

MARY

Oh, you are strange, and terrible. I'd have thought a lover would be praising love. The sweetness of it, the kindness. I'd have thought that after going through the waters and the storm, there would be a bright land the other side, where there would be a daily happiness in love, and quiet and content. It's not the sea-bird screaming on the wave-tops would be my notion of it, but a lark on its nest in the shadow of tall grass, and a sunny sky over it that is full of songs.

APOLLO

A daily happiness, quiet, content,

These are not gifts of love. Love is a tempest,
A lightning-flash, a sudden thunderbolt,
Cruel as fire and greedy as the sea.
Quiet may come when love is satiate,
And where content is, love is long gone by.
'Tis not the brown lark on its earthy nest,
But the proud eagle, seeking for its prey;
Not the warm glow of the domestic hearth,
But a wild bonfire flaming to the sky,
Devouring and consuming, uncontrolled
By any law except its own mad will.
You cannot bind to a familiar use
This perilous element. You may not house it
Beneath a narrow roof.
Oh! come with me
Thou far too lovely for the daily cheer
Of some rough country churl—Oh! come with me:
I am the ruthless wind, the consuming flame,
The over-whelming ocean—Come with me
For I am also gentle as the Spring,
And know the secret of the western wind
That makes a singing harp of hedge-row leaves,
And opens budding blossoms with a kiss.

MARY

What am I to say, what am I to say? There's a charm in your words that melts my heart, but there is a wildness in them that makes me afeared. You come in here out o' the night. I have never seen you before, nor even heard your name. You are a stranger from some outlandish country—Oh, when I look at you, and when I listen to your voice, I dare not think what

place you may come from. But yet, there's such a madness on me this night, that I know in my heart if you were to beckon to me, and you goin' out yon door, I would rise on my two feet and follow you to the world's end.

APOLLO

There is an island in the midworld main,
Shaded by palm and oleander woods,
A flowery island ringed by purple seas
Where the sun shines thro' all the blossomed year,
And where the silver kisses of the moon
Make the night magical. There we shall love
And thro' our slumber hear the nightingale
Mix her melodious sorrow with our dreams.
Follow me, leave this bleak and desolate land!

MARY

And leave the roof that shelters me, the kindness and care of friends, the fields I know, and the hills that I've looked at since I was a child.

APOLLO

Follow me! leave the trivial cares and toils
Will steal your beauty, making you old too soon.

MARY

Aye, cares and toils that I've grumbled at often enough, but if I leave them I leave so much more. The hopes that every woman has in her heart. A man of her own, a house of her own [*softly*], an' childre' of her own. Oh, that's the secret of the lark on its nest, an' it's more to a woman than all the wildness of love.

APOLLO

You have strange hearts, you mortals, and strange courage
Who make of thunderbolts domestic drudges,

Harness the lightning to the kitchen spit
And tame a river to fill earthen vessels,
But if love be tamed, then love will surely die.
Oh, it is wild of heart and wild of wing,
Eagle or sea-bird, haunter of the storm.
You cannot mew it in a narrow cage,
Nor chain it to a perch. It comes or goes
At its own will, unheralded, unseen,
You must not seek to hold it, nor delay
Its flight when it would part. Savage and free,
And all-sufficient to itself is love.

MARY

Oh, you would make love in your own image, for you are wild and strange. When you talk of love you talk of your own heart, and it is the savage beauty of your heart that makes your words beautiful. As you speak to me you seem to take me far away from the life that I have known. You carry me to a world that is different, that is full of loveliness and music, and of flowers that I have never seen, and of songs that I have never heard. But it is not my world. For all its beauty I would not be happy there. It is a great delight you are offering me, but a delight that would soon pass. And [*passionately*] I would lose my life in it—and my soul.

APOLLO

Then you refuse. You will not follow me,
Nor taste of love, because you are afraid.

MARY, *in an ecstasy*

Oh, God help me—I will go with you. Let me taste the brightness and the delight—I will follow you, altho' it is only to my death.

She stands up. Apollo stretches out his arms. She moves to him

Enter Paddy

PADDY, *with pleased excitement*

Mary, I've bought thon wee pig o' McManus's.

Apollo and Mary stand looking at each other. They seem not to see or hear Paddy

PADDY

D'ye hear me, Mary? Holy Mother! what's gone wrong wi' you two? Ye're glowerin' at other as if ye were graven images. For God's sake, Mary, take your eyes off yon fella, an' hear what I'm sayin'. I've bought thon wee pig.

Mary reluctantly releases her eyes from Apollo's gaze, and turns to Paddy. She speaks as if in a dream.

MARY

Good evenin', Paddy.

PADDY

Where's yer Uncle Barney?

MARY

He's in bed wi' the cold.

PADDY

Well, an' it's time ye spoke to me. I'd get as much attention if I was gulderin' at the big stone on the Cromlech. Come here, Mary, I want to speak to you.

He draws Mary aside. They speak in low tones

Tell me, Mary, what d'ye make of him? [*Pointing at Apollo.*]

MARY

How do you mean?

PADDY

D'ye think he's out o' Downpatrick?

MARY *puzzled*

Out o' Downpatrick?

PADDY

Aye! escaped from the Asylum. D'ye not think he's mad?

MARY

Mad? Are you mad yourself?

PADDY

No, I'm not mad, an' right well ye know it; but am I like thon fella, do I speak like him?

MARY

No, I never heard you speak like him.

PADDY

He has the most outrageous tongue in him ever I heard. Would a wise body talk like yon?

MARY

But do you expect everyone to speak like us country-folk, Paddy? Do you think every one different from us must be mad?

PADDY

Don't tell me, Mary, that ye believe all them tales of his, that he's some sort of a god, an' comes from [*in a hushed voice*] the other country?

MARY

Oh, how can I tell, a poor ignorant girl like me, but no mortal man could talk like him. To listen to him, it's like opening a window to let in the sun, but the sun of a brighter country than this——

PADDY

For God's sake, Mary, have a bit o' sense. Has he been puttin' a spell on ye? Have ye fell in love wi' him? Do ye like the fella?

MARY

He is too great for liking. But when he calls me I will follow him. If you had not come in now, we'd have been away.

PADDY

Are ye gone clean mad? Away stravaigin' the hills wi' yon lunatic? Mary, dear, have ye lost all your sense o' decency an' wisdom?

MARY

It's not a question o' wisdom. I know the foolishness of it. But something draws me that is far greater than wisdom, and I must go.

PADDY

Mary, Mary, ye'll break my heart if ye go.

MARY

I'm sorry for you, Paddy. Ye were always the kind, decent lad —but I can't help myself.

PADDY

Well, I'll help ye. Divil a fut will ye go wi' him, while I have my stren'th.

MARY

Oh, Paddy, you don't know what powers are against you— I'm feared to think what might happen to you if you angered him.

PADDY

I'm not feared o' him.— Feared o' him, is it, I could ate him.

MARY

There are those who strike, yet are unseen. All your strength is of no use against those hidden ones. And I will not have you hurt, Paddy.

PADDY *hoarsely*

Mary, you almost make me believe that he is—one o' Them. Oh, I amn't feared o' him all the same, but I'm feared for you. O, Mary, don't go wi' him!

A voice calls inside, Mary! Mary!

MARY

There's my Uncle, I must run in an' see what he wants. He's quare an' bad the night. And mind, Paddy, no quarrellin' while I'm away.

She goes out

APOLLO *has been sitting by the fire. He comes forward towards Paddy*

Well, friend, have you no word for me your friend,
Me, whom you saved from death on that bleak mountain?

PADDY

An' a sore day for me it was that ever I set eyes on ye. I wish I had left you to starve on Spelga. But the big soft fool I am, to be givin' ye good drink from my granda's bottle, an' bringing ye here to warmth an' shelter, an' all to have ye steal my own wee girl on me. Friend, sez you, it's the quare sort o' friend ye've been to me.

APOLLO *amazed*

What words are these, what these wild accusations?
What harm have I worked? What evil have I done?

For against you I am innocent of ill—
You have my word—the promise of a god
Given on yon desolate mountain. You are my friend.
What of my debt can ever be repaid
I will repay—Ask of me what you will.

PADDY

That's very fine speakin'. But do you mean it all?

APOLLO

You have my word. The promise of a god.

PADDY

Well, the Lord forgive me, if I'm unhospitable—but what I ask you is this: get out o' here, an' leave us alone.

APOLLO

But why this change of mood? I came not here
Of my own will. You brought me to this door
And bade me wait for you beside the fire
In converse with the maiden. What have I done
Should sudden turn my friend into a foe?

PADDY

Och, ye're very slow in the uptake, an' ye make it very hard for me to explain. Can't ye see, man, that I'm coortin' the girl? Aye an' expectin' to marry her before long. This very night I might have been askin' her to name the day, but when I come in here, what do I find? You've that way come over her wi' that fine palaver o' yours, that she's all for kiltin' up her skirts, an' runnin' off wi' you across the mountains—God knows where till, but it's little good she'll get out of it. Ye say ye're my friend, well, show it by bein' decent. Here's her an' me near-han' trysted. If I hadn't brought you in this night there'd

never have been any trouble between Mary an' me—but in you walk, an' when you've known her a short half-hour, ye're ready to carry her off an' leave me lamentin'. I put it to you as a man, is it fair or right, stirrin' up strife between lovers like that?

APOLLO

Alas! alas! What wayward fate pursues me,
Must I be always stirrer-up of strife?
In high Olympus I have set the gods
At variance. Brought to the starry eyes
Of Juno, jealous glances. The white breast
Of Venus have made heave with spite and envy;
Have kindled anger in the all-Father's heart
And earned his malediction. Here on earth
Shall I bring sorrow to the kindly man
But for whose aid I had perished in these hills?
Insensate and ungrateful, ever froward,
Pursuing my own pleasure, ever slow
To think what misery I bring to others.
Yet—she is lovely as a single star
Shining at even in a tranquil sky.
He will not know how rare her beauty is,
How worthy to be cherished. Few brief years
And she will be bent down with common toil,
Wrinkled and worn, the brightness gone from her,
And all the splendour of her body's grace
Dishonoured and forgot. She will never learn
What glory and delight are hidden in love,
How passion ripens the soul, and sets it free
Till body and soul in rapture are made one.

Yet I have pledged my word. I must deny
For the first time my heart its own desire.
I must give up her beauty, and refuse
All the bright hopes it promised [*turning to Paddy*]
Listen, friend,
You love this maiden, and would wed with her?

Mary returns unnoticed, and stands listening

PADDY
Aye, I like her well, an' I believe she'll make a good wife—an' I'll be good till her. But, Mister, she's got the great notion o' you, how's that to be put out o' her head? For women's quare creatures for broodin' over things.

APOLLO
You have my word, the promise of a god.
Here I renounce my hold upon her heart,
Unsay the passionate pleadings of desire,
And yield her to my friend, virgin and free.
I am not powerless, though a lonely exile,
Some remnant of my godhead clings to me
Swaying the human spirit to my will;
And at my word's command, she shall forget.

MARY, *coming forward passionately*
Oh, what deceivers you are, all of you, men or gods or fairy-folk—whatever you may be. There you stand the both o' ye, bargaining for me as if I was a heifer at a fair. Am I not to have a word to say at all? Has either o' ye the right to make a gift o' me, or take a gift o' me? D'ye think I have no pride in me,

that I'll go wi' either o' ye, when ye've spun a coin for which o' ye will have me, like two drovers in a bar tossin' for drinks?

PADDY

Och! Mary, now, och Mary, have a bit o' sense. Sure it's all for your own good we're makin' this wee arrangement.

MARY *bitterly*

Aye, ye'll make a wee arrangement about me will ye, the way ye did wi' McManus about the young pig. Ye'll buy or sell me, the way ye do yer cattle. But it's not you I'm blamin' most [*to Paddy*]—[*She turns to Apollo*] but you! you! with your noble speeches and your grand thoughts. You could moither the head of a poor country girl till she'd rise up an' follow ye across the world—an' then pleased wi' your power over her, just hand her to the first man asks ye for her. Ye'd give me to Paddy as easy as ye'd give him a match to light his pipe, wi' never a word to ask me if I was willin' for the change. Oh, the shame of it. An' me that was thinkin' it was the great lover was come for me at last. Didn't ye praise me for my beauty as if I was one o' the queens o' the earth? Didn't ye bring brightness into my heart, an' songs into my mind? Wasn't I believin' the oul' tales of the ballads were comin' true for me—all the time forgettin' it was only a fine gentleman takin' his sport wi' a common girl; och, ye have broken my heart, ye have killed my dreams.

She throws herself down across the table, sobbing

APOLLO, *coming forward to table, and laying his hand upon her head, he speaks in a very gentle voice*

So, you are hurt in your first play with love,
Poor child, and blame your playmates for your hurt.

I have a medicine for the suffering heart,
A certain cure even for love's distress.
But ere I teach your sorrow to forget,
One word be said. I have not mocked at you,
There was no feigning in the words that wooed
Your queenly spirit, nor falseness in the praises
I sang unto your beauty. Ah! believe
Not with light heart I keep my plighted word
And yield you to my friend. Not easily
I bend above you now to say farewell
And with that word desire's bright visions close.
Yet ere I lift the latch and seek the dark—

Spoken slowly as an invocation

Oh, may oblivion like a gentle sea
Invade your heart, and when you sleep to-night,
Wipe from your memory all thoughts of me.
And as th' incoming tide sweeps clear the sand
Of every wrinkle made by dancing waves,
Of every foot-print left by wandering birds,
So may the recollection of our dreams
Fade from your mind, and only peace remain.

He goes out.

After a pause Mary lifts her head, and looks round as if dazed. Paddy sits in his chair and stares at the door

PADDY

I'll swear he vanished from the room like a ghost. Did you see him go, Mary?

She does not answer

I'm half believin' he was one o' Them. What d'ye think, Mary?

She does not answer

But anyway it's well he's gone. Company like his isn't for the likes of us. It's too upsettin' altogether.

MARY, *almost in a whisper*

He is gone—vanished. The sound of a latch raised, a door closed—He is gone like that. And the beauty is gone out of my life. No more dreams of islands wi' palm-trees, and a purple sea round them—No more words wi' the lilt of a song in them.

There was a maiden of Cyrene once
Had hair like yours, woven of ruddy gold.
I loved her to her hurt.
Now the earth covers her—

[*with a passionate cry*]

But I'm still alive—I be to go on livin'.

Paddy is pacing up and down the room uneasily—finally he comes and sits down near her

PADDY *jauntily*

An' now, Mary, I suppose there'll be no difficulty, will there, about you an' me? When will you make it, Mary—eh, girl?

MARY *dully*

I don't know.

PADDY *alarmed*

But ye'll have me, Mary. Ye'll have me?

MARY *dully, after a pause*

Och—I suppose so—

PADDY

Mary, my darlin'.

He rises from his chair. Mary springs up and stretches out a hand. She speaks shrilly

MARY

Sit where ye are, Paddy. Don't come near me! Don't lay a hand

on me. There's been enough foolishness here to-night. I'm fair sick o' love-makin'. If you must stay, sit quiet there an' smoke your pipe.

Paddy sits down, takes out his pipe, fills it slowly. Strikes a match, smokes a few puffs. A smile lights up his face. He leans forward and speaks to Mary.

PADDY

Mary, yon's the rare jewel o' a wee pig.

[CURTAIN]